

## Press Club, 18 NOV 02

**Question:** Sir General, resolution 1244 still has a mandate?

**General Lute:** There is a very simple answer to that question, and that is yes of course. And the surest sign of that is the fact that we are sitting here today with the US Army still in Kosovo about to hand off to a new team. And, the surest sign of that is our soldier's still patrol the streets and the hills of Kosovo, and I don't think there is any more sure sign or signal of the international communities commitment that the fact that the Secretary General Kofi Annan is actually in Kosovo today demonstrating his support for the UN mission. So, Thank You

**Question:** In the structure of KFOR there have been some changes due to the reduction of the troops. What can we change in the future of this Brigade?

**General Lute:** Well, it is a fundamental of military operations that we constantly assess the situation we are operating in and attempt to adjust our troops to that new situation. So, as you mention one adjustment might be fewer troops, but there are other adjustments. The most important adjustment during my time here in Kosovo has not been the reduction in size, but rather a, a change in how we operate. And here, of course I'm referring to our movement away from guarding what we call fixed sites, and moving towards a more mobile, flexible concept of how we operate. And this change in concept reflects the new reality of Kosovo, a Kosovo with an emerging police force, a Kosovo with a lower violent crime rate and a Kosovo that deserves a more mobile, flexible operational standard. Thank you.

**General Keefe:** And if I can just add; the force that I bring here has trained under the operational requirements that General Lute just explained, and I'm fully confident, as our my commanders, that we are fully capable to meet all the requirements of our mission.

**Question:** There has been many rumors about Russian troops not being commanded by KFOR. Who commands Russian troops inside the Multi-National Brigade?

**General Lute:** The command and control of the Russian troops here at Multi-National Brigade East is exactly the same as every other national contingent in this Brigade, and in KFOR. Every national contingent in KFOR reports to two chains – two commanders. Each National contingent reports to the International KFOR Commander for day to day operational matters, but for logistical matters, and matters of administration, we report to our national channels. So, for example, on operational matters I report to LTG Mini Com KFOR, but on national matters I report to General Meigs a US General in Heidelberg, Germany. Colonel Zeora, the Russian commander here in my Brigade area has a similar arrangement. Thank you.

**Question:** I have a question for General Lute. MNB(E) has for the last three years, showed great support of the TMK troops, support to them so they can be more responsible for duties that they have. What is your assessment about how capable they are to get more responsibilities in this direction?

**General Lute:** Well, I agree with you that the TMK has made a great deal of progress in the last three years. And, the TMK gives the people of Kosovo a unique and important capability, and that is the capability for support in the case of natural disasters. And certainly we saw good evidence of this last spring when the TMK responded very quickly and appropriately to the earthquake in Gjilani. You may know that just last week the TMK conducted an exercise across Kosovo all focused on being able to respond to the emergency needs of the Kosovo people. So I think all the people of Kosovo and the international community should be satisfied that the TMK has made such progress in three years on such an important mission. My role with the TMK only has to do with this existing mission and I'm not in the position to suggest additional missions. Thank you sir.

**Question:** I would like to know your opinion about some Serb parliamentary giving statements of the KFOR supports terrorism. That KFOR tolerates the statement of the Serb fundamentalist is that KFOR tolerates terrorist.

**General Lute:** Well, the wonderful thing about a democracy is that everyone gets to speak his or her opinion. So, while I'm not prepared to comment on someone else's opinion, I will give you mine. What I can promise you, is that any activity in this sector that threatens the safe and secure environment from any groups, at anytime, night or day, will be combated by the soldiers of MNB (East), and that's more than an opinion, that's a fact. Thank you.

**Question:** When it comes to the city of Gromovo, when the refugees were coming back to see their homes, what happened, were rocks were thrown at them. Right now there is a 24-hour curfew put on them, and what do you have to say about that?

**General Lute:** Well, I take two things from the unfortunate incident in Gromovo. I think the first lesson is that Gromovo illustrates that there are still people in Kosovo, citizens of Kosovo, who are stuck in the past, and are not willing to move into the future. The second lesson I take from Gromovo is that once again we're reminded that it's the local citizens who must step forward to help us prevent and hold people accountable for such incidents. The protective measures, the security measures, that are in place now in Gromovo are there in an effort to help the people of Gromovo step forward and help us solve this crime. So the same town of Gromovo illustrates both of those points, which apply in other places around Kosovo as well. And it's actually a good example of how KFOR will not tolerate illegal behavior. And when the people of Gromovo will not tolerate, come to the point that they do not tolerate criminal behavior then we can all move forward together. There are people in Gromovo today, who know who is responsible for this crime, and these people should step forward. The curfew that's in place in Gromovo, is in place to assist the people in an effort to cause them to step forward. And in the last several days some people are doing just that. Thank you

**Question:** According to some reports of national news agencies, President Bush has announced possible reduction of US troops in Balkans. What report of US global strategies have you received such signals from pentagon, and if so what are the new plans of actions? Where is he going to get some signals from pentagon?

**General Lute:** Well, what I can tell you about our troop strengths and the types of troops that we bring to this mission relates back to my earlier answer. So, the number of troops and the types of troops we bring to this mission are largely dictated by the situation here in Kosovo. I've received no instructions; I've received no orders that indicate a declining US commitment to this mission.

**General Keefe:** And, I just add that the most precious resource for a nation is its sons and daughters. And, just like on General Lute's watch there were thousands of Americans on the streets of Kosovo so too will be the case under my command. And that fact of our presence speaks louder than any words of America's commitment.

**General Lute:** Thank you.

**Question:** In your opening statement Sir General, you mentioned that you are leaving Kosovo both satisfied and dissatisfied due to the event that happened yesterday, the day before yesterday. I would like to know your opinion about the status of Kosovo, knowing the fact that this is the second International conference being held in the United States? I would like to know your opinion of about how do you see the future of Kosovo?

**General Lute:** When I said that I was both proud and dissatisfied, I was not referring to any one event, but rather the pattern of events that I've seen over the last 6 to 9 months. On the one hand the accomplishments of Kosovo in the last three years point to our progress against Mr. Steiner's standards. On the other hand there are things that cause us to recognize that we're not, we should not be satisfied, and that there are people here in Kosovo who are impeding progress against those same standards. So I agree with Mr. Steiner, and that is that the future of Kosovo is not yet determined, and only time will tell, and the future is very much in the hands of the people of Kosovo. As I've said at almost every one of these press club events the people of Kosovo must decide wither those few who wish to keep Kosovo stuck in the past will dictate the future or whether the majority of Kosovo citizens who want to see a brighter future will get their wish. And KFOR's basic mission is to give the people of Kosovo the opportunity to select between those two futures. Thank you

**Question:** Can I try to make two questions?

**General Lute:** You can try. Maybe you can borrow his question.

**Question:** The question is how many soldiers do you have under your command and how many will the new general have?

**General Lute:** The numbers are not, are not useful because even during my command the number has changed dramatically over time. Both going up and down. What is important is that we will have the correct number on the ground to do our mission. And General Keefe and I are comfortable with the number on the ground today and of course on Thursday when we shake hands and I depart. O.K., that was a quick one, go ahead.

**Question:** What is your cooperation with local government in the Ferizaj? Since we have information that you haven't had many meetings, you or previous General, General Hubert? Does this have to do anything with the flag incident or is just part of the regular jobs you have? You doing your job, they doing their job.

**General Lute:** Well, there are 7 municipalities in my area and I assess that our relations, the KFOR relations, with all seven sets of municipal leaders is fine. I will tell you that most of the time, however, our partners in UNMIK and in particular the municipal administrators in UNMIK are the ones who have very close day-to-day relations with the local political officials. And I receive no reports of problems that are particular to Ferizsi. Sir.

**Question:** Since my question is last question, before I address question, I like to appreciate/thank General Lute for cooperation in the name of and we hope we'll cooperate the same with new general as well. My question is what is your message for the citizens of Kosovo?

**General Lute** Well, as my soldiers are about to depart Kosovo we made a video of pictures of my soldiers working with the citizens of this region, and in particular with children. And we showed this video to every group of soldiers who are departing and we gave them copies to show their families when they return home. And we selected very carefully the music that went with the video. So the answer to your question is the title of the song that we selected. So, so the answer to your question and the title to the song was "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow." And what this means of course is do not give up hope that tomorrow can be better than the past. And if my soldiers and I in some small way have contributed to a better future in Kosovo, then we will leave here successful.

**General Keefe:** And if I can just add with respect to this press club, this in and of itself is very impressive. Because one of the under pins of modern society is a free and open press. So I will continue these and I look forward to our press club next month. And in closing, I would just say that the soldiers under my command are ready to complete this mission, our part, to do our portion of the mission. And I ask the people of Kosovo not to let the bad people pull us back to the past. But, let's move together forward to a bright future.

**General Lute:** And now both of us join in hoping that we'll see all of you on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock.

**Translator:** Thursday?

**General Lute:** Thursday, and throughout my period I wanted to say a personal “Thank you,” to all of you for what you do for your citizens. And if you have just one extra minute – I’d like to just come around and shake your hand.